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Minorities in Higher Education: The Changing Southwest

Arizona

A report prepared by the WICHE Information Clearinghouse in cooperation with the Western Regional Office of the College Board and with the support of the Atlantic Richfield Foundation

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WICHE, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, is a nonprofit regional organization. It helps the thirteen member states to work together to provide high-quality, cost-effective programs to meet the education and manpower needs of the West. Member states are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Through its Information Clearinghouse, WICHE provides information to assist higher education and governmental policy makers in the West.

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Foreword

Sometimes we may become aware of societal trends without recognizing their potential effects on our social institutions. At other times, we may fail to respond adequately to social changes, even though we are aware that they are taking place. Among the virtues of our society are both the tendency toward self-correction--to make adjustments in our social institutions so that they function effectively--and the tendency toward making adjustments that anticipate needed changes and that, in a sense, preempt the need for self-correction.

As data in this and companion reports show, the current levels of education and income achieved by racial and ethnic minorities fall below that of Whites. This imbalance in economic and educational attainment, plus the rapid growth in the population of racial and ethnic minority groups, raises important issues for education and government policy makers in each state. It is the intent of this report to help focus the discussion on these issues and to encourage appropriate responses.

WICHE is grateful to the organizations and individuals who have worked with us on this important project. The College Board cosponsored the study and provided assistance and advice at several stages. The Atlantic Richfield Foundation provided additional financial support. A regional advisory committee, whose members are listed on the following page, provided valuable assistance in preparing these reports and helped develop a strategy for disseminating the results of the study.

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Introduction

This series of state reports is intended to highlight the implications for educational planning of the changing demography of the Southwest. This project is the outgrowth of an earlier report, which was prepared to provide background data for a regional higher education conference on minority access and retention in higher education (Kaufman et al., 1983).

The decision to concentrate on minorities in higher education in the southwestern states follows from several conclusions that have been well documented.

- Certain racial and ethnic minorities have been underrepresented in higher education relative to nonminorities. This is especially true of Hispanic students, who are well represented, proportionally and numerically, in the population of these states.

- These minorities are even less well represented among college and professional school graduates.

- Increases in the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities among successive age cohorts present a challenge to educators and policy makers concerned with reversing these patterns of underrepresentation.

The reports focus on each of five southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas) individually in order to call attention to the most important findings in each state.

As college-age populations in these five southwestern states grow in terms of both the numbers and percentages of ethnic minority individuals, policy makers will be faced with a number of serious educational and political questions. For example:

- Are current approaches to provision of educational opportunity--for all seeking it, regardless of ethnic background--sufficient, now and for the future?

- What are the implications for higher education and for institutions' program and resource "mix" of the growing minority share of the college-age population and the simultaneous decline (in some states) of the proportion of Whites in the same age groups?

- What are the implications of the growth of these minority populations for the economies of the states and their supplies of highly trained manpower, given the current distribution of minority students throughout the educational system (by institutional level and type, for example)?

- What are the implications for the higher education institutions of the current pattern of distribution of minority students, given the changes in the composition of the college-age group?

- If the educational patterns of minority students remain unchanged as their numbers grow, what are the possible social and political consequences?

These questions are meant only to suggest the seriousness and complexity of policy issues that need attention. The hope of the organizations publishing the report is that its contents will be useful as these challenging questions are addressed.

Definitions

The information in these reports comes primarily from two sources: the 1980 census of the population and related surveys by the United States Bureau of the Census provided population and demographic data, and the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provided education data. Reference to these two sources ensures that there will be comparability in the data presented across states and that other users will have access to the same data sources.

Caution must be used when comparing the two data bases, however, because each source defines racial and ethnic groups differently, with particular impact on the "Hispanic" population group. The HEGIS format designates five racial or ethnic groups: American Indian, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and White. The Census Bureau uses the racial designations American Indian, Black, Asian, Other, and White, plus a further designation "Persons of Spanish Origin" and "Persons not of Spanish Origin," stating that persons of Spanish origin may be of any race. In this report, the Census Bureau data have been reconciled with the HEGIS data format, resulting in the following comparable groups:

HEGIS	CENSUS
American Indian	American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts whether of Spanish origin or not
Black	Blacks not of Spanish origin
Asian	Asian and Pacific Islanders whether of Spanish origin or not
Hispanic	Persons of Spanish origin, regardless of race
White	White, not of Spanish origin
Residual	Total population minus the above (also Other races not of Spanish origin)

While these breakdowns do not avoid all problems of comparability, they appear to work well for the purposes of this report. To keep the terminology short, in all cases Black and White refer to Black not-Hispanic and White not-Hispanic. Exhibits derived from census data refer to the category "Spanish origin," while exhibits derived from HEGIS data use the term "Hispanic" to identify essentially the same group.

It further must be recognized that the terms "Spanish origin" and "Hispanic" aggregate into one group several ethnic groups, e.g., Central American immigrants, Latinos, Mexican Americans, and others, which may vary from state to state. Each of these groups has its own demographic and cultural characteristics. Policy makers may wish to be aware of these different characteristics and of their implications for higher education.

The most recent and reliable data available were used in this report. In some cases more recent data were available, but older information was used because it was comparable with the data for earlier years whereas the newer data were not. Where the racial and ethnic composition of the college-age population is compared with the composition of the student population and the distribution of degrees among racial and ethnic groups (Exhibits 8A-8E and 9A-9E), HEGIS data from 1980 were used for the education information in order to compare them with census data from the same year.

Summary

- Arizona's population is projected to be between 4.1 million and 4.8 million by the year 2000, up from 2.7 million in 1980, a twenty-year growth rate of between 52 and 78 percent. (See Exhibit 1.)

- Nearly four-fifths of the population growth from 1970 to 1980 can be accounted for by in-migration, which is projected to remain high. (See narrative for Exhibit 1.)

- People of Spanish origin accounted for 16.2 percent of the total population of Arizona in 1980, but they accounted for nearly 26 percent of the 0-4 age group. (See Exhibits 2 and 3.)

- By 2000, one-third of the age 0-4 population is projected to be of Spanish origin. (See Exhibit 3.)

- Blacks represented 2.7 percent of the total population in 1980, American Indians 5.6 percent, Asians 0.8 percent, and all others 0.1 percent. The American Indian population shows growth patterns similar to that of the Spanish-origin population. (See Exhibits 2 and 3.)

- Arizona has the nineteenth highest proportion of people aged 25 and older with college degrees. Whites far exceed minority groups in postsecondary educational attainment. (See Exhibit 4.)

- Data suggest that Hispanics and American Indians tend to have higher high school dropout rates than Blacks or Whites. The Hispanic and American Indian enrollments in twelfth grade in fall 1982 were only 68 and 63 percent respectively as large as the Hispanic and American Indian enrollments in ninth grade three years earlier, compared with 85 percent for White and Black enrollments. (See Exhibit 5.)

- Nationwide figures show that 83 percent of Whites (adults and school-age respondents to census surveys during the period from 1974 to 1978) completed high school compared with 72 percent of Blacks and 55 percent of American Indians and Hispanics. (See narrative for Exhibit 5.)

- National data indicate that smaller percentages of students from low-income families enroll in postsecondary education than students from medium- and high-income families. In Arizona, relatively high percentages of Spanish-origin, Black, and American Indian families earned less than $15,000 in 1979. (See Exhibits 6 and 7.)

- Present enrollment and earned degree patterns show serious underrepresentation (relative to their proportions in the college-age population--aged 20-29) of some minority groups at all levels of postsecondary education. (See Exhibits 8A-8E and 9A-9E.)

- Patterns of degrees awarded to minorities between 1976-77 and 1980-81 are markedly different from the overall pattern in Arizona. Each minority group has a unique pattern. (See Exhibit 10.)

- In summary, the greatest population growth in the next twenty years will take place among the minority populations, whose rates of postsecondary educational attainment and socioeconomic status have been low historically.